editorial introduction
imagining interiors — 2025 interior educators conference

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This Special Issue of *Idea Journal* consists of contributions from the Interior Educators, Imagining Interiors Conference, 2025, held at Edinburgh College of Art, The University of Edinburgh on 13 and 14 November 2025. It includes a selection of eight essays that explore themes of re-imagined interiors as practice or product that will be of interest to the designers, historians, and theorists of interiors and to those who study its representation and imagining in film, fiction, journalism, and other media. In addition to these texts, the Special Issue also includes three visual essays that draw together a selection of image contributions from the peer-reviewed exhibition that accompanied the conference.

Imagining Interiors aimed to explore several different relationships between images and interiors: to explore the use of images of pre-existing interiors (surviving or not) as historical evidence; to explore the ways in which images can generate interiors; to explore the ways in which we use interiors, and to explore the images we make of them, to re-imagine our own sense of interiority.

The conference was developed by a group of researchers at Edinburgh College of Art who explore ideas of the interior image from a diverse series of theoretical perspectives. Dave Loder brings an interest in the virtual, immersive interior image, and its currency in social media and the world of AI. This is evidenced through his key role in establishing the Image|Imaging|Interiors research cluster between Edinburgh College of Art and Glasgow School of Art. Rachel Simmonds's research into the work of modernist Nordic architects makes use of archives and images to explore their role in exhibition design of the twentieth century and also relationships between them and Scottish architects of this era. Ed Hollis's writing and drawing re-imagines interior histories as stories, by recomposing their form. Gillian Treacy's research into lighting and its atmospheres engages with the ways in which we visualise interior sensoria. Gina Olsson's work focuses on narrative brand environments in relation to image and materials [Fig 01.].

Imagining Interiors is one of a series of events sponsored by Interior Educators, the UK's subject body for Interior Design, since its foundation at the 2006 Interiors Forum Scotland conference. In 2024, the Interior Educators conference was hosted by Northumbria University. Entitled 'Practice', it focused on interiors as a discipline largely of re-use. In 2026, the Interior Educators conference 'Vacantscapes: Unfolding Interior' will be hosted by the Glasgow School of Art. It will explore new possibilities in the nature and potential of vacancy in interior architecture and its related fields. Imagining Interiors was sponsored by Interior Educators, but invited worldwide contributions, many of which are represented, in developed form, in this Special Issue of *Idea Journal*.

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Figure 01.
Photograph: Rachel Simmonds, 2025.

reflections on the interior and its images

Where did the theme of imagining interiors come from? What are the nuances and problematics of imagining interiors? And how have these ideas been put to work? Reflecting on these questions to begin framing this conference foregrounded the deep theoretical concerns that underpin foundational discourse on key concepts of interior space. It equally foregrounds the recent history of how such discourse has been collaboratively explored in Scotland and in Australasia with *Idea Journal* over the past two decades. In several ways, this conference picks up on a relationship that began to be comprehensively examined in a themed issue of *Idea Journal* from 2007, Volume 8.1 — Transitional Reflection, led by Jill Franz and Dianne Smith.[1] It has since been transformed by shifts in new perspectives, theories, and new technologies of interior and images that have equally been explored in subsequent issues of *Idea Journal*, and have emerged as major themes in much interiors research in the UK.

Published in 2007, Volume 8.1 of *Idea Journal* marked what was, at the time, noted as a 'point of transition' — both for the journal and the field of interior design itself.

> [...] a domain of meaning in which its constituent players and acts align to give it definition and generate practices that become the evolving rules of the game that continue to be contested.[2]

Among the contributions to that issue was an article by the Interiors Forum Scotland, which constituted the then five interiors programmes in Scottish Universities. Their essay, entitled 'Rethinking Inside the Box' equally reflected on a conference held in 2006 that was similarly titled 'Thinking Inside the Box.'[3] The essay correspondingly addressed changing practices of interior architecture in Scotland and called out the limited platforms for the representation and discourse of this practice area of spatial design.[4] It was, in retrospect, a formative event, welcoming a global audience and marking Scotland's 'first contact' with *Idea Journal* and the Australasian interiors representative body IDEA: The Interior Design / Interior Architecture Educators Association. It equally marked the formation, in a fringe meeting of the 2006 conference, of Interior Educators,

which parallels IDEA as the UK's representative body for interior education. The success of this consolidation of like-minded practitioners, educators, and theorists at this point of transition led in the following year to a second conference and reader by the Interiors Forum Scotland, entitled *Interior Tools, Interior Tactics*.[5]

These events, at this moment in time, foregrounded a number of key themes concerning the maturing field of interior education and research. First, they signalled their involvement in growing global attempts to define interior design practices as a unique pedagogical and theoretical entity. *Intimus: Interior Design Theory Reader*, for instance, was published the year before the Thinking Inside the Box conference.[6] The then Head of Interiors at Parsons NYC, Lois Weinthal's contribution to the 2006 conference was entitled 'Towards a New Interior' and pointed towards the comprehensive *Handbook of Interior Design* she co-edited with Graeme Brooker, now Head of Interior Design at the Royal College of Art in London.[7] Summative publications of this sort established a theoretical frame from which future enquiry on the interior, as a self-aware spatial design discipline, could depart.

Second, this moment of activity consolidated debates around interiors as the adaptive re-use of the architectural object. Written while they were both at Manchester Metropolitan University, Graeme Brooker and Sally Stone's book *Rereadings: Interior Architecture and the Design Principles of Remodelling Existing Buildings* had been published in 2004.[8] Additionally, Fred Scott's On *Altering Architecture* was published in 2007.[9] Considered by many as one of the founding fathers of interior architectural thinking, Scott's work has since paved the way for rich discourse and enquiry on interior thinking in the UK and Europe. The result is that re-use is now central as an architectural practice in a way that would have been unthinkable twenty years ago. It formed the theme of 'Practice', the Interior Educators conference that preceded Imagining Interiors in 2024.[10]

By contrast, contributions to the Thinking Inside the Box conference from Australasian colleagues challenged the predominance of architecture as a launch point for interior design practices. In 'What's in a Canon?' Suzie Attiwill of RMIT Melbourne suggested that there was, perhaps, no need for such an architectural idea, while the landscape scholar Gini Lee discussed interiors as forms of curation.[11] In certain ways, exploring expanded practices of interior and spatial design is work that *Idea Journal* has continued with the 'un' series under the editorial leadership of Luke Tipene: Unplanned (2025), Unbuilt (2024), Uncertain (2023), as well as (extra)ordinary (2021) with Julieanna Preston, Unbecoming (2013) lead by Ed Hollis, and Dark Space (2017) lead by Lynn Churchill.[12] It has also explored the impacts of interior themes and theories in other fields, including Economies (2011) led by Preston, Ecologies (2010) and Territories (2009) led by Lee, and Fictions (2022) led by Preston and Tipene.[13]

Adjacent to the Thinking Inside the Box conference was the leading body of historians of interiors: the Modern Interiors Research Centre, based at Kingston University in London. Their construction of the 'modern interior' is perhaps best expressed in Interior Historian Penny Sparke's eponymous book, which was also published in 2006.[14] It describes the interior as a production of the division between the domestic and public spheres in the industrial revolution. More recently, *Interiors in the Era of Covid* revises the earlier work on the Modern Interior by considering the fundamental restructuring of relations between the domestic and the public during the pandemic.[15]

imagining interior images since 2006

Among the varied concerns that emerged during this point of transition around 2006, the idea of imagining interiors did not, at the time, seem to make a significant appearance as a subject of inquiry. The Interiors Forum Scotland discussed it as a problem, rather than anything else, noting how:

> [...] design is often limited economically and logistically by the paper space abstraction of scaled visualising rather than real scale doing. Whilst other disciplines have highly visible expressions of their developing craft, (for example, painters paint, sculptors sculpt), interior design students rarely construct interiors.[16]

Additionally, these comments reflected common complaints at the time that the commodification on interior images in magazines and makeover television programs peddled false narratives of the discipline and all that it entailed, as if, somehow, images were not quite to be trusted.

There was, however, one contribution to the conference that brought together several of these concerns under the umbrella of images. Speaking on his recent publication 'The Emergence of the Interior', historian Charles Rice noted that the idea of an interior as the habitable inside of a building was a relatively recent appearance in the etymology of the word.

> It was only from the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, that the interior came to mean the inside of a building or room. Also in theatre, a 'set' containing the inside of a building or room.[17]

Noting the concurrent development of interior drawing practices and the invention of photography during the same period, he explored the historical correlation between the rise of the interior, as cultural object, and its images during the nineteenth century.

> The interior [...] emerges as a physical, three-dimensional space, as well as an image, whether it be a two-dimensional representation such as a painting, a print in a portfolio of decoration, or a flat backdrop that could conjure up as a theatrical scene.
>
> [...]
>
> Significantly, doubleness involves the interdependence between image and space, with neither sense being primary.[18]

Rice's idea of 'doubleness', as the simultaneity of the interior as both space and image forms a starting point for Imagining Interiors as an idea. A significant text for Rice in his formulation was Mario Praz's book *An Illustrated History of Interior Decoration*, which equally helped frame our approach to the themes of this conference.[19] It is an expensive book: a history told largely, as Praz freely admits in the introduction, through the use of beautiful images. In particular he harboured a fascination for early nineteenth-century watercolours of aristocratic interiors, often painted by the women who were confined within them, which he collected avidly, and which can still be seen in his apartment in Rome today.

Like Rice's analysis, in Praz's world of interior images, the interior itself is also an image — of its occupants. *The House of Life*, his autobiography, is written both as the story of his life and a walk through his own apartment, from room to room. At the end of the book, we find ourselves in the last room in the apartment, looking over his shoulder as it were, into a bullseye mirror.

> The person who looks into a mirror is myself, and this book that I have written is like a conspectus, in a convex mirror, of a life and of a house [...] I see myself as having become an object and an imagined museum piece among museum pieces, already detached and remote [...] I have looked at

> myself in a convex mirror, and have seen myself as no bigger than a handful of dust.[20]

Praz was a scholar of romantic literature, and our own sense of self in 2026 may be less solipsistic, less egoistic, than his. But the point remains: to imagine interiors is not just to use images to record (pre)existent interiors, or to generate new ones, but to contemplate our own sense of interiority too. As Rice noted, the 'image-based sense [of the interior] also encompasses a reverie or imaginal picture'.[21]

Images generate, as well as document, interiors. We can use images to call new interiors into being — literally to imagine them, using sketches to rehearse them with ourselves and within design teams, models, mood boards, and visualisations to sell them to clients; construction and production drawings to get them built. Or at least, that is what they do if we follow a largely architectural design process, in which the essence of the interior is understood to inhere in walls, floors, ceilings, furniture, and so on. Praz, like Rice, understands these material phenomena, however, as merely outward manifestations, traces, of the essence of any interior: the person who inhabits it.

If, as the Interiors Forum Scotland recognised in 2006, we transgress the ideas in 2025 that design is an act of visualising rather than making, the pages of a magazine or the screen of a television could constitute, rather than just represent, interiors. If the history of interiors is as much a history of media as it is of spaces; if those interior images explore attempts to represent the field's expanded themes of uncertainty, unbecoming, unplanning, unbuilding; if interior image production attempted to draw not, as architectural conventions might, fixed forms, but processes of adaptation, then the field of interiors might be further in its unique, experimental attempts to visualise itself.

reimagining interior images in 2025

At the same time as the Interiors Forum Scotland conferences were taking place in the early 2000s, London's Victoria and Albert Museum held a very different conference based on the same theme as our conference last year. 'Imagined Interiors' (2006) focused on images as evidence in and of design history, 'From the vantage point of the early twenty first century.'[22] As its editors, Jeremy Aynsley and Charlotte Grant describe,

> [...] across all facets of the media, images, descriptions and discussion of the domestic interior surround us. From television to magazine, exhibitions, trade shows and Internet, we constantly see and are sold images of ideal and real interiors.[23]

What was true in 2006 is multiply true now and itself foreshadowed several of the themes and issues that were present in the Imagined Interiors conference, almost twenty years later. First, the digital production of images has, simply, massively multiplied their number. In 2006, the digital photograph was still relatively new, and only just making its way onto the phone. The possibility of sharing them, let alone editing them with filters and so on, was still almost unknown. Second, in 2006, the production of interior images was still a privileged practice. The TV makeover show was broadcast — offering a dictatorship of taste (good or bad), and expert advice. Now such authorised advice must compete with millions of Instagram posts, through which anyone can tell a makeover story or pronounce on taste and style. Third, interiors themselves have become products, exchanged, sometimes monetised, as images: as the backgrounds to social media; as quasi domestic experiences on Airbnb; as self-design apps; as digital twins. The Paris Opera, for instance, hires the interior image of its own digital twin for corporate events. And, recently, the advent of generative AI precipitates the production of images by extra-

human agents — images that are then often read and consumed by other AIs, creating an autonomous world into which no eye peers. In 2006, we distrusted TV makeover programs. Now we trust no image at all, nor even our own capacity to distinguish between them. Imagining Interiors, then is an attempt to re-imagine images after two decades in which they, and our relationship with them, has been transformed beyond recognition.

imagining interiors 2025 — conference overview

introduction to panels

The conference was structured into the following five panels, entitled to explore a particular theme of imagining within the interior that was expressed by the grouping of speakers selected. Given the ambiguous nature of the conference's theme, as we had hoped, there were not just interesting connections made between speakers, but also between panel themes over the two days. Each panel can be summarised as follows:

panel one: interior fragments

How we perceive an interior is the result of fragments of information experienced. We engage with it through our own eyes, as well as through those of the creators of imagery around these spaces. We can therefore consider the interior to exist as a series of fragments in time. The first is in the mind of the designer, then through the relevant drawings and images that created it, and finally through the experience and recording of those who engage with it. It is through these varied fragments that we understand an interior on multiple levels.

In this panel we considered the fragmentation of interiors through engagement with spaces based on archive drawings, photographs, and documents as elements of information [Fig 02.]. These resulted in not just greater understanding of spaces, but also as starting points for new interpretations. We engaged with the process of this approach as much as the findings, sharing ideas around cataloguing experience and proposals in various analogue and digital formats. The result was a greater understanding of the interior as fragments of drawings, fragments of descriptions, fragments of conversations, fragments of images, and fragments of history.



Figure 02.
Photograph: Dean Chalmers, 2025.

panel two: interior imaging

As expounded by Rice, the modern interior has always been doubled by its image, a spatial experience and its self-representation that has informed the histories, aesthetics, and consumption of the interior. While he points to a plurality of various modes of publishing media from the modern period, the contemporary post-digital image-saturated and hyper-simulated environment delivers new technologies and modes by which images of interiors are produced, transcribed, and distributed. This panel considered the twenty-first century mediation of the interior across a diversity of platforms and stages, propagating new spatial imaginaries under the service of visually articulate capitalism, with a particular inflection upon domesticity [Fig 03.].

In areas of housing-led regeneration in numerous UK cities, a multitude of billboards and site hoardings host slick computer-generated visualisations of the residential interiors under construction, a self-replicating apparatus of images expressing ideals of individual domestic lifestyle. This is an imaging that exteriorises the privately imagined interior into the public urban realm. Equally, the domestic realm contains more discrete and less performative technologies to image and capture the inhabitable home and trouble imaginaries of privacy and autonomy. A growing complex of embedded sensors and cameras intrude upon the home, and inhabitants are themselves complicit to varying degrees to suggest new modes of domesticity and digitally mediated intimacy. However, under these pervasive conditions the early twentieth-century writer Virginia Woolf's demand for a room of one's own is increasingly challenging to secure. How can we resist the surveillance and commodification of the domestic sphere under capitalism's imaging of the interior?

The domestic interior is a contested site of in/visibilities, productive of digitally mediated imaginaries of contemporary living. By appropriating the apparatus of capture, perhaps these in/visibilities can be redeployed in the pursuit of freedom from a datafied circumstance. Can the interior be camouflaged to disrupt digital observation? Or can LiDAR be positioned as a non-invasive light-based media and creatively deployed to model alternative imaginaries of domesticity?



Figure 03.
Photograph: Rachel Simmonds, 2025.

panel three: reflecting the interior

Often, interiors are imagined as passive voids, occupied by active human subjects, or artefacts to be turned into images, which themselves are objects, made for the contemplation of other subjects. But this panel inverted these assumptions, suggesting instead that interiors and images produce subjects.

In this panel we considered the ways in which institutional interiors model discipline and behaviour, imposing conceptions of self-hood on their occupants, whether it suits them or not [Fig 04.].

We examined how public perceptions of the American artist Georgia O'Keeffe are constructed by imagined interiors: carefully curated images published in mid-century magazines of the carefully curated interiors of her ranch at Abiquiú, New Mexico, quite as much through the significance of her paintings. We extended the discussion to consider how the imagination of interiors on social media is an analogous machine of self-production.

At the other end of the scale, we considered how a collective subject, the entire nation of Modern Greece, is imaginatively constructed through the repeatedly re-imagined landscapes of central Athens, from the glorification of classical ruins in the nineteenth century, to Dimitris Pikionis''s landscape of jumbled fragments on the Philopappos Hill that suggests, instead, a continuity between the past and the present.



Figure 04.
Photograph: Dean Chalmers, 2025.

panel four: drawing out the interior

As we create images through the medium of drawing, we employ a range of methods and techniques to conceive of imaginary places yet to be realised, and/or record and reflect on interiors since completed. These drawings serve as modes of communication, exploratory devices, sets of instructions, and visual representations of ideas made manifest.

In this panel we discussed both how we use drawing to represent the interior experience, and how we read and respond to the drawings of others, as we explored the consequence and effects of image creation [Fig 05.]. Multiple approaches were conveyed, overlaying analogue and digital, in a series of hybrid explorations to enhance learning and understanding, to anticipate the experiential, and to reimagine interior narratives across time. We questioned the intended audience and purpose — what is it for? And who is it for, with consideration for both the maker and the user?

These diverse contributions captured multiple approaches to innovate and push the boundaries of 'drawing' as we viewed persuasive images of trajectory sections attempting to capture movement through time, interrogated how AI and traditional studio craft can be used to shape our teaching practice, and allowed the room and our audience to actively become the drawing, as we passed silk screenprints overhead in a final act of reimagining.



Figure 05.
Photograph: Dean Chalmers, 2025.

panel five: narrating the interior

To develop an understanding of an interior, past and present, we can refer to a range of creative research tools to expose human subjectivity, lived experience, and meaning through polyvocal, tangible, and intangible fragments uncovered within and beyond the interior in question.

The narrations within this panel challenged the value of a collective range of creative explorations in revealing each interior's memory repository. Employing the use of physical archival materials, digital making, written historical narrative, quotation and image relationships, and readings of imagined perspectives, unique perspectives were presented. These approaches sought to expose and represent individuals' emotional meanings and memories to encourage a holistic positioning of the selected interior spaces [Fig 06.].

These diverse, imagined perspectives were discussed, endorsing the necessity of layered, plural techniques to extrapolate valuable insights into lived human experience by creating new meanings for spaces through lost voices and imagined experiences. While encountering the interior by re-defining the space digitally to re-reading a biographical script, the interior can be defined best through the overlapping of these distinct counter-narratives. By combining the layers of narration through the diverse voices and techniques of the researcher with past inhabitants, we can come closer to re-imagining the interior and the life it has lived.



Figure 06.
Photograph: Kashish Goel, 2025.

exhibition

Once the images had been selected for the exhibition, the conference committee discussed the curation of these within the historic Sculpture Court at the heart of Edinburgh College of Art. Early on the Committee agreed to avoid the obvious division of elements by purely digital and analogue format. As with the panels, connections between the images were clear on multiple levels. We considered the design of the exhibition to be focused on the best way for visitors to engage with the elements and curate their own journey. To facilitate this, we concluded that parity in format was key, with all printed images at A1 size and all moving images on the same size screen. As with the conference, connections between images could be made in different ways, both by interpreting context and production method [Fig 07. and Fig 08.].

Exhibitions of interiors and architecture are intriguing in that generally what you are exhibiting is not the existing space but a facsimile of it, usually at a different scale, and, in the case of photographs, through the eye of the photographer. You are also presenting, as academic Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen describes, 'an act of displacement from its original and temporal context.'[24] In today's world we are bombarded by images of spaces, both real and imaged, daily through social media and other digital platforms. We have not stopped engaging with real spaces, but we have become overwhelmed by the breadth of access we have to interiors we have never and may never visit. That is not to dismiss the digital and imagined, but this conference sought to set a common platform within its exhibition element in which to engage physically with all types of interior images.

The exhibition ran in tandem with the presentations and formed the hub of the social interactions between panels. Some panel presenters had images in the exhibition, but most contributors were showing exclusively in the exhibition. The work varied from details of existing interiors to fantastical digitally generated imagined interiors, and many other options in between. Each contributor supplied a short abstract explaining their work and this was set next to each piece. We used a very simple setup of trestle tables and modular metal display system to form an open landscape of images throughout the sculpture court. The location meant that for its duration it would be seen by all staff, students, and visitors in the building as well. The nature of the space also dictated that set up and take down were required to be done in three hours. All printed images were displayed in black frames laid angled from the tabletops on two pieces of standard timber, coloured with tape to match the conference colours. As this exhibition was also visible from the main floor of the sculpture court and the balcony above, it was important that the system had visual impact and consistency, without overpowering the various images on display. Digital pieces were provided with headphones where necessary to allow the audios to be enjoyed without distraction.

We found that as the conference unfolded people began to revisit works on display, engage with the creators who were present, and use them as starting points for developing conversations around the ideas of the imagined and imaged interior. A selection of these images have been explored in the visual essay that weaves its way through the other contributions of this special issue. We have considered them under the three headings of 'Image as Moment', 'Image as Host', and 'Image Between Imagination and Memory.'



Figure 07.
Photograph: Vanshikha Chopra, 2025.



Figure 08.
Photograph: Emily Wilson, 2025.

keynotes

On both days of the conference the keynotes of architectural photographer Hélène Binet and academic Sophia Psarra provided conclusions that developed themes discussed. They were chosen for their complementary approaches through the images as both object and narrative. Binet's absorbing photographs of projects by architects including Sigurd Lewerentz, Jørn Utzo, and Peter Zumthor immersed us in these spaces through her eyes. Her attention to the reading and composing of space through photography brought us directly into contact with light and materials and their critical role in creating an interior. In her heavily image-focused lecture, she shared her view of familiar and unfamiliar interiors throughout the world. We became acutely aware that within her work what has been described as the understanding that 'in the search for the "perfect" composition one sacrifices a certain amount of personal expression' and that what interests her was 'not only the photographic representation but also investigation.'[25] We are seeing these building through her eyes only once she has absorbed the spaces. A valuable lesson on patience was provided to make us think about how we engage with interiors to really understand them. Our initial focus may have been on content and process, but engagement with time is equally important and often overlooked [Fig 09.].

Psarra concluded the conference by taking us on a journey of the narrative life of interiors, from the page to space. Using the four texts of Jorge Luis Borges' *Fictions* (1944), Italo Calvino's *Cosmicomics* (1965) and *Invisible Cities* (1972), and Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* (1980), she explored how what is written becomes real through the process of narrative and diagram. In particular, the role of the labyrinth was explored both as image and form of writing. In the lecture she investigated how meaning is advanced through this process [Fig 10.]. Among questions she explored she asked: What role does this form of mapping play in knowledge translation? And can coherence and meaning be extended in symbolic form? By considering the interaction between architecture and literature, she looked at how myth, language, and art shapes and perceives how we experience a work . The inclusion of selected historic images of chosen interiors and diagrams of her own analysis process developed our understanding of her process of interior analysis. In this way we were able to make connections back to both narrative and imagery within the panels and how these were equally part of the process and outcome of imagining interiors. What Psarra drew out was the importance of individual approach and sensibilities in the overall process of imagining and representing interiors.



Figure 09.
Photograph: Dave Loder, 2025.

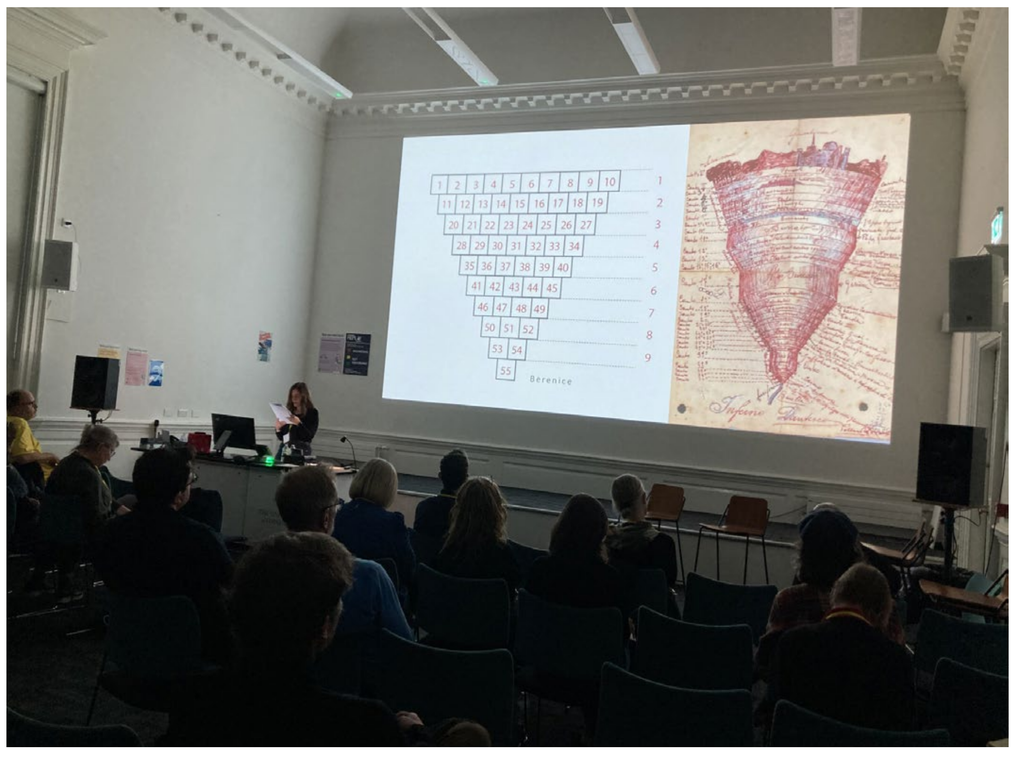


Figure 10.
Photograph: Rachel Simmonds, 2025.

outcome

The conference provided time for reflection and discussion around what Rice would describe as the interactions between the interior as space and as image in various forms.[26] To this the narrative of process, presentation, and reflections was added. In her book *Architecture and Narrative Psarra* notes, in relation to narrative, that it,

> [...] requires a narrator and a reader in the same way in which architecture requires an architect and a viewer. A narrative, therefore, is not only the content of the story that is narrated, or the way in which it is interpreted by reader, but also the way in which it is structured and presented to an audience by an authorial entity, a writer, a film-maker, an architect or the curator of an exhibitions.[27]

The international nature of the conference contributors developed this beyond our own boundaries, bringing lived experiences from different cultures into the frame [Fig 11.]. Who the interiors are/were for also played a part. A lived experience of a space versus an academic interpretation of it are very different things. It is also interesting to consider why, as current-day academics, we are drawn to interiors from the past, often in locations to which we have no personal links. What became clear within the context of

this conference is that, within the interior community, the experience of being a designer and not just an academic becomes important in many cases to what is driving our need to explore and explain our world, not just in words but in images too.

The wide age demographic of the conference allowed us varied perspectives on spaces and ideas, often with technology being a bridge to explore spaces in different ways between generations. The student–teacher perspective also played a part, with students presenting ideas, and ideas being presented about learning and teaching. Considering it from the learners' perspective opens new opportunities for us as academics to explore technology within the dissemination of interior ideas.

Equally, time spent with archive information on historic interiors allows for a connection to the past that cannot be replicated through newly formed versions of these spaces. We considered how we as academics interpret this, along with ways of representing these interiors. By considering the engagement with existing and emerging technologies, we discussed the role of the archive in both a historical and future context.

The background to the papers also raised an interesting thread around the process of research. We are all too often focused on the outcome of research, but, in several of the talks, it was the process that created the result that garnered as many answers. In a sense the process of imagining interiors was a free takeaway for all, considering how they may evolve their process of investigations as well as the presentation of the outcome.

In relation to the exhibition, it became for its short existence an interior of its own. Not imagined but created from the imagination of all the contributors and delegates. These thoughts formed conversations that stirred ideas and thoughts that were shared. The conference and exhibition were both photographed to form their own interior legacy of the events and the spaces that held them. A selection of these images are included at the end of this Editorial Introduction.



Figure 11.
Photograph: Dean Chalmers, 2025.

conclusion

As John Berger notes,

> [...] images were first made to conjure up the appearance of something that was absent. Gradually it became evident that an image could outlast what it represented, it then showed how something or someone had once looked – and thus by implication how the subject had once been seen by other people.[28]

This summarises succinctly the outcome of the conference. Our eyes and ears were opened to images and narratives of others about the interiors. Within the interior spaces in which the conference occurred, people were encouraged to think and share their ideas. We looked beyond just representing an interior that already existed; rather, we explored existing images as well as creating new ones. The narrative, process, and solution are all inextricably intertwined and come from our own representation of ideas and process linked to others' interpretation of that system.

This conference did not aim to define an answer to the question ‘what is the imagined interior?’ Indeed, as it proceeded it raised more questions, and that became key in its success. Interiors are for people, and within our investigations through different imaging media into the interior tectonics of various spaces, we traversed this through the lenses of others. This understanding in turn leads to a greater connection to these spaces. It became clear that the analogue and the digital, the historic and the contemporary are not two sides of a debate; rather, they are eternally connected. This conference sought to encourage the development of this intertwining. Our decision to have attendance in person only, with no recording or online engagement, focused the ideas and discussion to the group of 100 or so attendees. Only social media transmitted images of the conference to the wider world. We found this to be a positive approach, allowing those involved to focus on the discussions with those visible to them, in an interior not imagined but real.

The following papers and visual essay will expand upon some of the themes covered in the conference, exposing within the Special Issue an image of the interior as explored, presented, exhibited, and discussed by the international group of academics and practitioners involved in the Interior Educators 2026 Conference Imagining Interiors. We hope that in now exposing this further through this Special Edition *Idea Journal* to you, the wider interiors community, it provokes ideas in your way of thinking, producing, and presenting ideas around the interior through images in various formats.

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imagining interiors 2025 — conference images







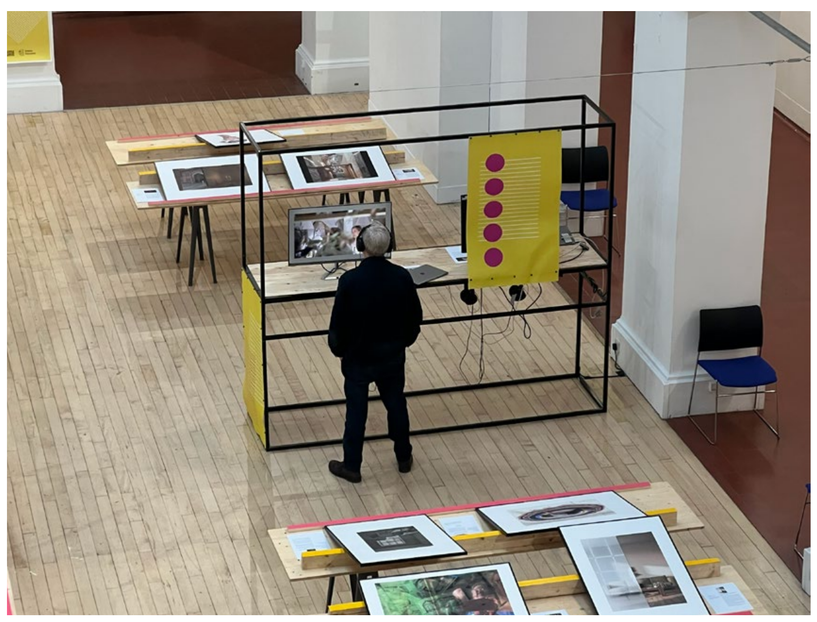












notes

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